

PARENTS FLAG EDMONTON

Newsletter

April 1994

Next Meeting Will Be:
Tuesday April 19, 1994
7:30 p.m.

For more information phone Lynne at [REDACTED]

THANK YOU!

We extend a big thank-you to Barbara MacLennan for being our guest speaker last month.

Gay Pride Week

Our next meeting will be geared towards organizing the role P-FLAG will play in this years upcoming gay pride parade. Please try to make it to this meeting because your ideas and suggestions are important. We will be discussing this years picnic which will fall on June 25, the last day of gay pride week. we would also like to discuss other areas in which P-FLAG could be involved in the pride week activities. Now is the time to think about becoming a volunteer.

Guest Speaker

Our guest speaker for April will be Ken Chalmers who is with the gay pride week organization committee.

STREET SAFETY 3

When walking on the street at night, do you know how to spot potential trouble? Are you aware of what is happening around you? Your safety might depend on it!

Avoiding an incident is the best defence, and WALKING DEFENSIVELY is the art of knowing if an incident might occur.

Look up the street as you walk along. If you see anyone who looks threatening, cross the street. If they cross also, cross back. If they follow you, run, because they probably have you picked out for something unpleasant.

Walking by the curb prevents attackers from surprising you by jumping out of doorways, but you must also be sure that no one is hiding between parked cars.

People hanging out of cars are acting suspiciously. They may be looking for a likely victim, but it is less likely to be you if you are alert.

If they are hanging out of a car yelling insults, get the licence number and report it to the police; but the police will only accept the report if you feel threatened.

Looking behind you is also WALKING DEFENSIVELY. Attackers can come from any direction.

A Reminder!

Last month we moved to a new location, if you have any problems finding it call Lynne at [REDACTED]

Canada

Equal rights for same-sex couples seen as inevitable as rulings pile up

MIKE CRAWLEY

Southam News for The Journal

Ottawa

Citing a string of judicial rulings, gay-rights advocates say it's only a matter of time before the Liberal government is compelled to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Judges and arbitrators are ruling in case after case that it's wrong to discriminate against homosexuals.

It's creating a climate that may allow the Liberal cabinet to move ahead in a highly sensitive political area — giving same-sex couples equal rights spousal benefits as male-female couples.

"It's clear that the courts are saying the highest laws in the land, the Charter of Rights, prohibit this kind of discrimination," said Susan Ursel, a Toronto human rights lawyer. "I'm hoping the politicians have reached a turning point in their understanding about diversity in families."

A Liberal committee under or-

Analysis

ders from Justice Minister Allan Rock is now working on a new definition of "family" based on the premise of "emotional and financial dependency," as defined in Australia.

But there's opposition to the plan within the caucus, Rock said. No one really knows how much.

In the House of Commons, only the Reform party and one Tory are expected to vote against gay-rights legislation, as the Bloc Quebecois and NDP favor it.

"I'm not convinced there is discrimination such that it would justify giving an identifiable group special mention," said Reform MP Diane Ablonczy, a lawyer.

"A lot of the bodies making these decisions are really not courts of law," said Ablonczy, claiming many rulings reflect the "bias or personal views" of those involved.

As recently as 1992, the so-called

"family caucus" of the Tory government criticized then-justice minister Kim Campbell for introducing legislative amendments to ban discrimination against homosexuals.

"To treat any group in our society as second class, as something less than human, is reprehensible in the late 20th century," said Ursel. "I can't believe it's still a point for debate."

For the majority of Canadians, it's not.

Two national polls — one by Gallup in 1985 and one by Angus Reid in 1993 — suggest that only one in four Canadians opposes gay-rights legislation.

Other evidence that the tide is turning comes from employers who have already extended benefits to their workers' long-term, same-sex partners. The list includes the City of Montreal, Dow Chemical, the Toronto police force and the University of British Columbia.

Some opponents cite cost as an argument. But Stuart Graham of Hewitt Associates, an international

firm that administers employee benefit programs, says that's not valid for such items as health insurance.

The money involved would be "almost inconsequential," Graham said, estimating the increased cost to companies would be no more than five per cent.

But pensions would be costlier. Will the long-term partners of gays and lesbians be eligible for survivor pension benefits?

"Revenue Canada is very concerned about it in the pension context," said Graham. "There's just no two ways about it in their view."

But there's also no two ways about it for Christine Donald, spokesperson for the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario.

"Lesbians and gay men have been paying money into those plans . . . and we haven't seen a penny of it back. I think the cost issue has been grossly inflated and I think it's being inflated by people who basically don't want to see us have equal status."

GAY RIGHTS IN CANADA

August 1969 — Homosexual acts removed from Criminal Code.

December 1977 — Quebec is first province to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation.

April 1989 — Canadian Human Rights Commission tribunal rules the federal government discriminated against civil servant Brian Mossop, who was denied bereavement leave to attend the funeral of his lover's father.

June 1990 — Federal Court grants Ontario prisoner Timothy Veysey visitation rights for his gay partner.

August 1992 — The Ontario Court of Appeal rules the absence of sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act violates the Charter of Rights.

September 1992 — Ontario Human Rights Commission orders province to give same pension benefits to same-sex and heterosexual couples.

October 1992 — Former air force lieutenant Michelle Douglas wins \$100,000 after being forced to quit because she is a lesbian. Armed forces agrees to end policy against hiring or promoting gays.

February 1993 — Supreme Court rules gay and lesbian couples do not constitute a family under the Canadian Human Rights Act, but says the decision might have been different if sexual orientation were included as prohibited grounds for discrimination.

August 1993 — Ontario Human Rights Commission rules all employee benefit plans in province must include same-sex couples.

October 1993 — Supreme Court agrees to hear an appeal of Federal Court ruling that homosexual couples aren't entitled to spousal benefits under Old Age Security Act.

March 1994 — Canada Post ordered to extend health benefits to same-sex couples.